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Chairman: Mr. Al-Bayati ..... (Iraq)
later: :Mr. Faati (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Gambia)

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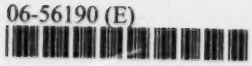

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 60: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/C.3/61/L.5)

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.5: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

1. **Ms. Hoosen** (South Africa), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it highlighted three core priorities of social development: poverty eradication, full employment and social integration. Recognizing that progress towards the goals announced at Copenhagen had been slow and uneven, the draft devoted special attention to the goal of poverty eradication and to strengthening the role of the Commission for Social Development for the follow-up and review process and called for increased support for the work of the Commission.

2. The draft emphasized that poverty eradication policies should address the root and structural causes of poverty, that gender inequality was an obstacle to people-centred development and that an enabling environment was a prerequisite for social development. It reaffirmed that international cooperation was essential for contributing to national efforts to implement the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and welcomed innovative financing mechanisms for funding development.

3. The draft text had undergone changes since its original circulation; she would therefore like to make the following oral revisions: the word "should" in the first line of paragraph 15 had been replaced by the word "shall", and the acronym "UNITAID" had been inserted in the eighth line of paragraph 17 after the words "Drug Purchase Facility". In conclusion, she hoped that the usual cooperative spirit would prevail and that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

(d) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/C.3/61/L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.6: Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing

4. **Ms. Hoosen** (South Africa), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the original sponsors, the Group of 77 and China, and the Russian Federation, said it aimed to strengthen national capacity to deal with issues of ageing and called for greater international support for national efforts to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The draft resolution further called for a bottom-up approach to the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan and encouraged consultation of older persons, with the particular aim of eradicating poverty among the elderly. It also invited Governments to designate focal points on ageing and called on the international community to provide adequate support for research on ageing and for boosting the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing. The sponsors hoped that the usual cooperative spirit would prevail and that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 98: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/C.3/61/L.7, A/C.3/61/L.9, A/C.3/61/L.2 and A/C.3/61/L.3)

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.7: Improving the coordination of efforts against slavery and trafficking in persons

5. **Mr. Dapkiunas** (Belarus), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the original sponsors and Ecuador, said that millions of trafficked human beings, mainly women and children, were denied their basic human rights on a daily basis. That problem, one of extreme concern to the international community, called for a coordinated response through global partnerships between Governments and civil society, under the aegis of the United Nations. The draft resolution proposed, among other things, the creation of an inter-agency working group on trafficking in persons, which would serve as a mechanism for streamlining the efforts of the

international community without incurring additional expenditure for the United Nations. Adoption of the draft resolution would send the strong political and deeply humane message that the international community was determined to eliminate the problem.

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.9: Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity

6. **Ms. Zarra** (Italy), introducing the draft resolution, said that Benin, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Morocco, Nigeria and Panama had become sponsors. Her delegation had wished to see the General Assembly play a more action-oriented role to improve the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) relating to crime, with a resolution that underscored the true added value to those activities. The draft took note of the report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity (A/61/179).

7. Her delegation sought to "biennialize" the omnibus draft resolution in order to streamline the work of the General Assembly, in the belief that the General Assembly would be better placed every two years, instead of annually, to assess steps taken, thus avoiding the need for an annual discussion of the omnibus resolution containing the same consolidated language. The draft resolution was therefore structurally different from its predecessors, including General Assembly resolution 60/175, and postponed a comprehensive assessment of the issue until 2007. At the same time, it recalled some of the most relevant new developments of the previous year and incorporated essential concepts. Her delegation was open to contributions and suggestions, on condition that they would not modify the new tenor and structure of the draft resolution.

Agenda item 99: International drug control (*continued*) (A/C.3/61/L.8)

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.8: International cooperation against the world drug problem

8. **Ms. Feller** (Mexico), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the original sponsors, as well as Ghana, Morocco and Nigeria, said that drug trafficking and drug consumption continued to have a devastating effect on development and stability. The draft resolution was more proactive than the previous one in 2005 and was based on the need for greater international cooperation and coordination. She thanked all delegations that had submitted additional proposals that had been added to the text and hoped that the final version would be adopted by consensus.

9. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) recalled the statement made at the Committee's fifth meeting by the representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in which he had announced that UNODC might take part in a peacekeeping mission planned for the Sudan under United Nations auspices. His delegation had immediately requested that the reference should be deleted from the statement, on the ground that it exceeded the UNODC mandate and pointed to its politicization.

10. At the representative's suggestion, he had met privately with him two days previously and received an apology and a promise that a representative of the Office would appear before the Committee to request removal of the reference. To date, however, no such representative had appeared, thus calling into question the credibility of the Office and prompting the Sudan to rethink its cooperation with UNODC, pending clarification of the matter. The Sudan would do all in its power to prevent UNODC from exceeding its specific mandate and politicizing the Office.

11. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) assured the representative of the Sudan that, in the absence of a representative of UNODC, his statement would be conveyed to the Office.

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/283 and A/61/303)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/38, A/61/122 and Add.1, A/61/318 and A/61/292)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/61/174)

12. **Mr. Petranto** (Indonesia) said that the limited references to the gender perspective in the work of most of the Main Committees of the General Assembly clearly indicated that stereotypes and segregation

remained challenges, increasing the gender deficit in various male-dominated areas of United Nations work. It was generally recognized that gender mainstreaming was a cross-cutting issue, and United Nations bodies should give it due emphasis. His delegation therefore endorsed the idea that the recently established subsidiary bodies should pay closer attention to gender perspectives, and they should do so while they were still in the early stages of developing their working methods.

13. Persuaded that progress for women constituted progress for all, his country's State Ministry for Women's Empowerment had been intensifying implementation of relevant national policies. Gender-equality programmes had been conducted in seven Indonesian provinces, with the participation of four community-based organizations and the mass media. The programmes had covered networking, capacity-building and advocacy for gender-responsive policies and formed part of a long-term national policy that would eventually cover all 33 provinces. Drawing lessons from the 2004 tsunami, the Government, in collaboration with other stakeholders, had promptly applied gender-sensitive humanitarian measures, following a series of earthquakes and tsunamis in Central and West Java. Those measures had dealt with the specific needs of women, including the provision of sanitation, clean water and reproductive health and counselling. In that connection, he expressed his delegation's gratitude to the international community for its generous support for the victims of the May 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake.

14. Indonesia had also been upgrading the legal protections available to female migrant workers, who accounted for some 77 per cent of the 2.1 million Indonesian migrant workers abroad. A special inter-ministerial agency had been created to monitor migrant workers abroad, as well as improved practical arrangements under a "one-roof" service to streamline the recruitment, pre-departure and return system. Advocacy and capacity-building were also being carried out among all social groups in an effort to increase awareness of trafficking issues and the commitment to anti-trafficking activities. Indonesia advocated the adoption of similar measures in countries of destination, possibly through agreements with concerned countries on mandatory consular notification to assist women migrant workers in difficulty. There was a need for partnerships in which member countries fulfilled responsibilities as mandated by the relevant internationally agreed development goals.

15. **Ms. Hastaie** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the situation for women was particularly difficult in countries emerging from war and armed conflict, with lack of education and information hindering women's access to health care. Prostitution and pornography were serious forms of violence against women and girls. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran paid particular attention to vulnerable groups of women, such as rural and urban poor women and female heads of households. Much progress had been made in increasing women's access to health, education and job opportunities. Protection and well-being of families were Government priorities. Great progress had been made in improving access for women and girls to education, and Iranian women were quite active in various fields of science.

16. **Ms. Southichack** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Political Declaration at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly constituted an important landmark in the promotion of women's development, gender equality and peace. Her Government's Constitution clearly set forth the responsibilities of the public sector, society and the family for the advancement of women. Legislation had been adopted to protect the rights and interests of women; promote women's education and training and gender equality; eliminate all forms of discrimination against women; and prevent and combat trafficking in and violence against women and children, thus creating conditions conducive to women's participation and empowerment in national defence and development.

17. Her Government had established a National Commission for the Advancement of Women to formulate policies and coordinate the activities of the relevant national and international organizations in the implementation of its national gender equality policy. Gender-disaggregated data had been introduced into the national statistics centre. The Lao Women's Union and the National Commission played an important role in promoting the full participation of women in the planning and implementation of her Government's poverty reduction strategy. A plan of action had been developed to ensure basic education for all in an effort

to address the issue of illiteracy and the existing gender disparities in the education sector, which had resulted in an increase in literacy levels and school enrolment. The quality of life of Lao people had been improved, including a decrease in maternal and infant mortality. Her Government had been implementing a birth spacing and safe motherhood project, among other women's programmes.

18. Women occupied leadership positions at all levels. The number of women in the National Assembly had increased by four in 2006, to 29. She noted in particular that a woman from the Hmong ethnic group was serving as Vice-President of the National Assembly. Furthermore there were two women ministers in the Cabinet. To address the traditional beliefs and ancient stereotypes which regarded men as superior to women in Lao society, her Government was making every effort to mainstream gender concerns in Government institutions and mass organizations and to implement the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

19. **Ms. Cavaliere de Nava** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that one of her Government policies' main objectives was the eradication of poverty. Promoting the rights of women and combating discrimination took on special meaning in that context. One particularly important element of her Government's gender approach involved the recognition under the Constitution of the economic value of housework and guarantee of social security for women who stayed at home. There was also legislation on equal opportunities for women and violence against women and the family.

20. At the administrative and political level, the national women's institute INAMUJER provided information and training on women's rights and worked to change stereotypes and discriminatory practices. Education and training for women were essential tools for achieving effective women's participation in public life and combating discrimination and the exclusion of women. Free education was available at all levels, without discrimination, which was reflected in school enrolment, more than half of which comprised women and girls.

21. The Secretary-General's report was comprehensive and useful. Her delegation agreed that violence against women required political will at all levels. The Venezuelan Government had therefore established a hotline for victims of violence and adopted a cross-cutting gender approach to its policies on health, employment, credit and other areas. It condemned violence against women in all its manifestations, including violence against migrant workers, trafficking in women and girls, traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls, crime committed in the name of honour and domestic violence against women.

22. Because social and economic development was essential for the development of women, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela opposed any measures which hampered such efforts, in particular unilateral coercive measures. Her delegation emphasized the importance of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly as well as the role played by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

23. **Ms. G/Mariam** (Ethiopia) noted with regret that the goal of gender equality at the United Nations remained far from being achieved, and stressed that ensuring gender equality was crucial for the achievement of development goals. The recommendations in the relevant reports of the Secretary-General were therefore of paramount importance and must be accompanied by adequate support to countries with the most disadvantaged women populations.

24. Ethiopia remained committed to the achievement of gender equality in line with the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration. In the education sector, primary and secondary school enrolment of girls had increased, as had the number of female students in technical and vocational schools. In the health sector, combating HIV/AIDS pandemic had been given high priority, resulting in a decline in new HIV infections. Efforts had also been made to educate the population on the gender dimension of the pandemic. Public awareness programmes had been conducted and anti-retroviral drugs had been provided to mothers living with the virus to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The number of births attended by skilled health professionals had also increased.

25. In the political field, although her Government had not reached the 30 per cent target for women parliamentarians, their numbers had significantly increased. Currently, there were 116 women members of parliament out of a total 547, and the deputy speaker of the House of Representatives was a woman. Women in Ethiopia had been subjected to discriminatory laws which seriously undermined the full enjoyment of their rights. In an effort to change that situation, her Government had revised its family law and the Penal Code to ensure the equality of men and women before the law. Under the revised Penal Code, perpetrators of violence against women such as rape and abduction could receive up to 25 years of rigourous punishment. The new family law had also enabled women to enjoy equal rights with respect to inheritance, divorce and custody of children.

26. Her Government's five-year development plan sought to maximize the potential of Ethiopian women, to narrow the development gap between men and women and increase the participation of women in economic, political and social spheres of life. It also included a gender system analysis in all Government institutions. In conclusion, Ethiopia remained committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of women in an effort to enable them to assume their rightful place.

27. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that many Palestinian families had been unable to observe Ramadan traditions owing to the economic blockades and the harsh restrictions on the movement of Palestinian goods and services imposed by the occupying Power. Israel had consistently engaged in the violation of international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the Gaza Strip. The occupying Power had continued to kill, injure and maim Palestinian civilians, including women and children; to destroy houses, property, vital infrastructure and farmlands; to confiscate land; to construct the expansionist Wall; to build and expand settlements and bypass roads; to arrest, detain and imprison thousands of Palestinians; and to cause the further deterioration of the already dire economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people by restricting the movement of medical and humanitarian assistance throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

28. Palestinian women had borne the brunt of those illegal Israeli policies and undergone constant and merciless harassment and humiliation, violence, terror, punishment and discrimination. Women who traditionally managed the household found themselves compelled to rely on the charity of relatives or international humanitarian organizations. Moreover, when confronted with the painful reality of death or imprisonment of one of their male family members, Palestinian women were forced to face these burdens and responsibilities alone.

29. Restrictions on the movement of people and goods had crippled the Palestinian economy, transforming villages and towns into isolated prisons and resulting in the untimely death of Palestinian women and children. Many pregnant women ready to give birth had been prevented by Israeli occupying forces from crossing checkpoints and receiving proper medical attention. Since September 2006, at least 69 women had been forced to deliver in the back seat of their car or, as one Palestinian woman had sadly recalled, "behind a bush, in the dust, like an animal". The psychological effect on Palestinian women who had undergone such treatment at checkpoints could not be understated.

30. Her Government had established the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2003 to ensure the mainstreaming of women's rights in all Palestinian Authority institutions and to address all types of violence against women. It was difficult to speak, however, of any real advances when women and indeed the entire Palestinian population were being denied their most basic human rights and the women of Gaza could not even secure basic food commodities such as flour, clean water or even baby formula to feed their children. Nevertheless, Palestinian women continued to strive to achieve their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination in their own independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The international community must work together to end Israel's 39-year occupation so that Palestinian women and their families might finally lead normal lives.

31. **Ms. Laohaphan** (Thailand) said that her delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as well as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Thailand welcomed

the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women. The United Nations should be an important engine for ending violence against women and its gender mechanisms must be strengthened. The Human Rights Council must give priority to the issue of violence against women and integrate the promotion and protection of women's rights and gender equality into its future work.

32. The relevant bodies addressing gender issues must closely coordinate their work and resources to ensure that the commitments of the international community to promote gender equality were being implemented effectively. In addition, the Peacebuilding Commission must ensure that the victims of gender-based violence in times of conflict were recognized, given redress and equipped with the means to move forward economically, socially and psychologically. It was essential that, once a conflict had ended, women did not again fall victim to stereotypes. The potential role of women as assets and contributors to post-conflict societies must also be fully recognized.

33. Her Government's efforts to end violence against women included the enactment of national legislation to prevent domestic violence, the setting up of crisis centres in several hospitals countrywide to provide medical treatment, and the provision of social welfare and legal advice for victims of gender-based violence with a 24-hour hotline. Non-governmental organizations in Thailand had also taken an active role in protecting and assisting victims of violence. Ending violence against women must begin by changing the attitudes and stereotypical mindset of men and boys, as well as of women and girls. The best place to start was at school. Education could serve to instil awareness of women's human rights, self-confidence among girls and women, and respect for women. There was also a need to employ the media to end gender-based violence and promote gender equality.

34. Her delegation noted with concern the lack of progress in meeting the gender-balance targets of United Nations organizations and encouraged them to accelerate progress towards achieving such a balance. Lastly, the higher prevalence of HIV among women as well as the feminization of migration underscored the urgent need for international action. Women must have full access to medicines and reproductive health programmes. The spread of HIV/AIDS could not be reversed without addressing the feminization of HIV/AIDS.

35. **Ms. Taracena Secaira** (Guatemala) said that while poverty in Guatemala continued to have a feminine, rural and indigenous face, women's economic participation, especially in the informal sector, had increased in the past 10 years. Guatemalan women had increased their participation in the public sphere, namely through the network of Urban and Rural Development Councils, and a number of new women's organizations had been established in the past three years. Guatemala had initiated a series of legislative and institutional reforms, for example, to decrease domestic violence, punish trafficking in persons and discrimination on the basis of gender or ethnic origin and strengthen reproductive health programmes. Efforts had also been made to reduce inequities and poverty, and to achieve economic growth.

36. To deal with the continuing problem of violence against women, an entity for inter-institutional coordination for the development of Guatemalan women had been created in 2004 under the Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM), incorporating matters relating to the security of women on the Government's agenda and providing support to women's organizations. The National Plan for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women had been widely disseminated, and a commission composed of representatives of human rights and security institutions, the three branches of Government and the Public Ministry had been created to address feoticide.

37. Guatemala had presented its sixth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in May 2006 and was evaluating and updating its National Policy for the Promotion and Development of Guatemalan Women in a participative process involving civil society. She commended the work of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), namely the technical support it provided to SEPREM in analysing statistics with a gender perspective. She also welcomed its assistance in HIV/AIDS prevention strategies and in strengthening the participation of women in economic sectors in order to increase their income and decision-making capacity in budgetary and policy matters in their communities.

38. In the light of the work conducted by the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence, it was particularly important for strong entities dealing with

gender issues and research and training for women to be able to provide assistance to United Nations agencies and Member States. In that regard, both UNIFEM and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) needed to secure resources in line with the responsibilities with which they were entrusted. Lastly, her Government reiterated its offer to host the Non-Aligned Movement's Second Ministerial Meeting on the Advancement of Women in 2007 and would soon specify the date.

39. **Mr. Sadykov** (Kazakhstan) said that his country attached great importance to ensuring that the gender perspective was incorporated into the work and recommendations of the United Nations committees and subsidiary bodies and follow-ups to the High-Level Dialogues on International Migration and Development and the high-level meetings on the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. He hoped that the Secretary-General's report on the in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122) would give strong impetus to national and global efforts in combating violence against women.

40. Kazakhstan reiterated its commitments to the outcome documents of the 2005 Summit, the Beijing Conference and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". Kazakhstan's National Commission for Women and Gender Equality had nearly completed a plan of action to improve the status of women in the country, and was taking steps to implement a strategy on gender equality for 2005-2015, which was based on the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and aimed to ensure the equal distribution of power and influence in society and equal obligations in the family, as well as freedom from gender-based violence. Furthermore, a draft law on domestic violence would be considered by the Parliament of Kazakhstan the following year, and Kazakhstan would soon be presenting its second periodic report on the implementation of the Convention.

41. Maternal, adolescent and child health and the reduction of maternal and child mortality were priority objectives of the State, which aimed to integrate the gender perspective into budget planning, legislation and the development of all social programmes, in line with the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In addition, Kazakhstan had a programme on microcrediting for the period 2005-2007, and $2 million had been allocated to facilitate access to microcredit, benefiting mostly rural women. The Government, together with UNIFEM, was organizing a regional consultation for heads of national women's machineries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), with the participation of representatives of donor-countries and international organizations, to be held in November 2006. Kazakhstan would continue to work in close cooperation with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women.

42. **Mr. Pham Hai Anh** (Viet Nam) said that his country had made considerable progress in the political and economic empowerment of women and mainstreaming gender equality in socio-economic development plans and programmes. To combat the scourge of violence against women, Viet Nam's National Assembly had launched a relevant initiative through its Committee for Social Affairs, and was currently considering a draft law for preventing domestic violence. That draft law focused on education, advocacy, reconciliation and education in the community, and on a series of protection and assistance measures for victims. It also stipulated criminal prosecution for serious acts of violence.

43. The Government was also undertaking measures to effectively deal with trafficking in women and girls. Data for 2005 and the first half of 2006 revealed that a number of relevant cases had been tried in first instance courts, a number of defendants had been prosecuted, and several large-scale cross-border trafficking rings had been disbanded. Efforts were being undertaken to improve the relevant legal framework and implement relevant projects, provide medical check-ups and treatment for victims, assist their reintegration through job training; facilitate their participation in the Viet Nam Women's Union and access to credit; and to protect the legal rights and interests of Vietnamese citizens married to non-nationals through bilateral agreements. Viet Nam also had anti-trafficking agreements with countries such as Australia, Cambodia and China.

44. **Ms. Almadhani** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country was implementing the recommendations and outcomes of all conferences on the advancement of

women, particularly the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Government had enacted a number of laws which ensured the equality of both sexes in all fields. In addition, women enjoyed special privileges under the Civil Service Law, and had laws in line with international treaties on equal wages and working hours, and regulations on maternity and nursing leave. Furthermore, the Government had recently taken legal measures to allow children of widows and women divorced from non-nationals to be naturalized through their mother. In 2005, the President had issued two new rules to eliminate any gender-based discrimination against working mothers.

45. The United Arab Emirates had established six national mechanisms for the advancement of women and the implementation of the recommendations of the relevant international conferences. It also had legislation in place to protect women, whether citizens or foreign residents, from all forms of violence, including domestic violence, exploitation and trafficking, with severe punishments for perpetrators of such acts. In the context of gender equality and the empowerment of women in decision-making, her country had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and had, for the first time, appointed female ministers — one under the Ministry of the Economy and Planning and another under the Ministry of Social Affairs — and had promoted a woman to the rank of brigadier in the army.

46. The country's achievements included: high female enrolment in schools; substantially improved maternity care; higher participation of women in the workforce; and increased investment opportunities. The Government continued its efforts to mainstream and promote a culture of gender equality and justice in all its institutions, placing a special emphasis on schools and the media. Finally, with respect to the occupied Palestinian territories and Palestinian women in particular, the United Arab Emirates called upon the international community to provide the necessary support and assistance to the Palestinian people, and to compel Israel to respect the relevant international humanitarian laws, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, relating to the protection of civilians. Lastly, it called for the strengthening of development assistance to developing countries to help them create an enabling environment for the advancement of their societies in general and women in particular.

47. **Mrs. Wamalwa** (Kenya) said that the establishment by the Government of Kenya of a ministry for gender issues and a commission on gender were major steps in the advancement of women. The Government emphasized providing assistance to rural women and ensuring their access to agricultural services and tools in order to enable them to become self-reliant. Kenya had almost achieved gender parity in school enrolment, which was at around 100 per cent, and the dropout rate had been stemmed by allowing pregnant girls to come back to school after giving birth. The highest court in Kenya had recently invoked provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to justify awarding the daughters of a polygamist man who had died intestate equal shares of his estate. That was a milestone in Kenyan jurisprudence.

48. In order to address the relatively low enrolment of women in universities, the Government had recently re-instituted affirmative action. As a result, in 2004, 45 per cent of students admitted to universities in Kenya had been women. The Government had also introduced quotas to boost women's representation in various government bodies and institutions. Women continued to bear the brunt of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, modest success had been achieved, with the prevalence rate now less than one third of what it had been in 1999.

49. A new law against violence against women, the Sexual Offences Act, had been introduced in 2006 to eliminate lacunae in the legal regime in Kenya. It defined the crime of violence against women and also addressed stereotypes used to justify such acts. Special desks had been established in police stations dedicated to handling cases of violence against women. In conclusion, she stressed that collective action on the part of Member States, development partners, civil society and other stakeholders was essential in order to build on the gains achieved so far.

50. **Mr. Rokolaqa** (Fiji) said that the Government of Fiji was providing financial support to civil society organizations which aided and sheltered victims of violence. In 1995, the police had adopted a "no drop policy" on all reported cases of domestic violence, which meant that all reports of violence against women

were investigated and cases brought before the Magistrate.

51. After the Beijing Conference, Fiji had committed to encouraging financial institutions to review lending policies and to working towards gender balance at all levels of decision-making. It had also pledged to promote an environment that was free of violence, especially domestic violence, sexual harassment and child abuse. The attainment of gender equality in the eradication of poverty was a priority for Fiji. Much progress had been made in providing access to education to girls.

52. *Mr. Faati (Gambia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

53. **Ms. Abu Alfayn** (Qatar) said international conditions favoured the participation of women in politics. While numerous international conventions had guaranteed the political rights of women, Qatar called for continued efforts aimed at overcoming the obstacles that stood in the way of the integration of women into political life and their election to political office. The individual, regardless of gender or skin colour, was one of the important bases upon which the system of government in Qatar was built and was the focus of the overall economic and social development strategy. Much had been accomplished with regard to achieving equality for women and removing the obstacles that prevented them from exercising their rights. Women had proven their talent and held positions of leadership and distinction in ministries and other government agencies. They served as legislators, senior officials and managers and accounted for a significant share of economic activity.

54. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs, established by royal decree under the leadership of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, wife of the Emir, was a significant step for women in her country inasmuch as the Council was responsible for implementing a national strategy for the advancement of women. To support the role of the Council, Qatar had enacted the Family Law and established the Family Court, and had taken measures to combat domestic violence and violence against women. Empowering women in various areas of development was vitally important to achieving the desired rate of development. The advancement of women and gender equality was necessary for social justice. In fact, they were the only way to build a just society that offered human, social, economic and cultural security for all.

55. **Mrs. Mladineo** (Croatia) said that the percentage of women in Government in Croatia currently stood at 35 per cent, with 21 per cent in the legislative branch and 61 per cent in the judiciary. Croatia was proud to be one of a small number of countries with a female Foreign Minister.

56. The Croatian Parliament had recently adopted a gender equality policy which implemented the concluding comments by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Croatia's most recent report. Accordingly, measures were being taken to create equal opportunities in the labour market, introduce gender-sensitive education, increase women's participation in public and political decision-making, suppress all forms of violence against women, advance health care for women and further strengthen institutional mechanisms. Lastly, she stressed that prevention of violence against women was the fundamental precondition for the advancement of gender equality.

57. **Ms. Sanchez de Cruz** (Dominican Republic) said that her country aimed to fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action, and attached great importance to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Those issues, together with those of extreme poverty, HIV/AIDS and primary education, were a priority in the country's policies towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In that context, it had set up a Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Goals to assess needs, define priorities and identify actions for achieving each of the Goals, and had recently made provision to meet those needs under the national budget. Moreover, the Dominican Republic had been selected by the United Nations as one of seven pilot countries to serve as models for implementing the Goals.

58. Her country, which was the headquarters for the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), fully supported and recognized the importance of the work which the Institute was carrying out, particularly in the areas of gender equality, migration, remittances and development, governance and the political participation of women at the local level, peace and security, and gender as a cross-cutting issue. The Institute had released a number of important

publications, many of which were translated into several languages and complemented the work of other United Nations entities dealing with gender issues. In that respect, States should strengthen and support the Institute and ensure its stability, as it was a crucial tool in the advancement of women.

59. **Ms. Dawaye Ayemu** (Myanmar) said that a number of large and influential NGOs were implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and promoting the development of women in Myanmar. The Government regarded trafficking in women as one of the worst forms of violence against women and had taken all necessary measures against trafficking in human beings, including the adoption of a national plan of action, the enactment of legislation, and bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation. A law against trafficking in persons had been put in place in 2005, which covered sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude and debt bondage. The law prescribed a 10-year minimum sentence to a maximum of life imprisonment for traffickers.

60. In response to the reference in the Secretary-General's report on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/61/174) to General Assembly resolution 60/233 on human rights in Myanmar, her delegation wished to put on record that the allegations regarding sexual violence against ethnic minority women were fabrications. It was not the policy of the Government to allow or condone sexual violence against women under any circumstances. Accordingly, the full force of the law was rigorously applied against perpetrators in that regard.

61. **Ms. Ndelemani** (Malawi) said that Malawi had ratified and implemented the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, leading to increased safeguards of women's rights. During the current year Malawi had adopted a law criminalizing all forms of violence against women and establishing women and girl friendly victim support clinics in police stations.

62. Legal and human rights literacy presented a challenge to Malawi. It was important to make girls and women aware of their rights, especially those living in remote parts of the country. Various initiatives had been launched to empower women economically, improve their access to productive resources and increase their participation in the labour market. Over time, pregnant women had been gaining increased access to pre- and post-natal services, as well as to antiretroviral drugs, where necessary. However, HIV/AIDS remained a very serious problem.

63. **Mr. Israeli** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Palestine had ignored the roots of prejudice against women in Palestinian society, instead shifting the blame onto Israel. Over a year had elapsed since Israel had left Gaza. However, that gesture had been met with Palestinian terror and the election of Hamas, a terrorist organization. Discrimination against and exploitation of women was a feature of Palestinian society, quite apart from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinian women were the victims of violence, sex crimes and honour killings in increasing numbers.

64. Checkpoints did indeed inconvenience those attempting to cross them, but the checkpoints were the result of a continuous campaign of Palestinian terror. Eight Palestinian women had become suicide bombers, and at least 20 other women had been apprehended on their way to commit similar acts. One Palestinian woman, permitted to go through a checkpoint after complaining of pain, had blown herself up, killing four soldiers and wounding 17 other people, including seven Palestinians. Palestinian terror had consequences for Israeli women. Twelve out of 15 victims in a terrorist attack on a Jerusalem pizzeria five years earlier had been women.

65. **Mr. Rasheed** (Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that everything had to be viewed in the context of the occupation, which was the source of all the problems experienced by the Palestinian people over nearly the last 40 years. The lives of Palestinian women were a constant nightmare of suffering and torture every single day. They were forced out of their homes at gunpoint as their children watched. When pregnant Palestinian women were not permitted through checkpoints, they had to give birth in the open air and were thus robbed of joy even at that important moment. Unilateral disengagement from Gaza by Israel had not been a step forward. It had been disastrous. Gaza was an open-air prison, and no food or medicine could go in or out.

66. **Mr. Israeli** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israel cared about the plight of Palestinian women, as they were the wives and daughters who would build stable, healthy families and a peaceful future. However, with Hamas in control of the Palestinian Authority, the plight of Palestinian women had not improved. Nonetheless, Israel had not lost hope for a partnership between Israeli and Palestinian women to work together for peace, democracy, freedom and tolerance in the region.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.